**FROM THE CHAIR**

**What Makes Us Distinctive**

*A Message from the Chair*

by Carl Flink, Chair, Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

*Carl Flink, speaking at Prof. Lou Bellamy’s retirement celebration, February 22, 2011*

**PHOTO: KELLY MACWILLIAMS**

When I think about what makes our department distinctive, three things come to mind immediately: people, places and ideas. We have an exceptionally active faculty which serves an outstanding group of talented, committed students. This is no more apparent than in the very prestigious awards faculty members have received over the past three years. For example, Ananya Chatterjea is currently the recipient of a 2011 Guggenheim Fellowship; Michal Kobialka was named University of Minnesota Imagine Fund Arts, Design and Humanities Chair in 2010, and is currently the CLA Associate Dean for Faculty; Michael Sommers won a 2009 Bush Foundation Enduring Vision Award; Sonja Kufince was named a 2009 CLA Scholar of the College; and Joanie Smith has received five consecutive National Endowment for the Arts Access to Artistic Excellence Grants.

We are located in an area with an unusually rich performing arts community, one in which our faculty members continue to be essential players and with which our students increasingly interact. Our relationship with this community has never held more promise than it does now, as the U of M/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program enters its second decade, and we continue developing RiCAP (Reimagining Community and Arts Partnerships), an initiative under which we have been exploring a variety of production partnerships with Twin Cities arts and culture organizations in order to create a learning community without walls. This April, for example, we will collaborate with Theater Latté Da to produce the contemporary award-winning musical *Spring Awakening* in Rarig’s Thrust Theatre – our first full in-house RiCAP partnership.

Our six performance spaces in the Rarig Center, the Barker Center and on the Showboat provide students with an array of venues in which to explore their artistic passions and apply their creative urges. And we have some exciting changes to announce concerning our facilities in Rarig. Last year we received a one million dollar Infrastructure Investment Initiative grant to redesign and renovate the Kilburn Arena Theater. Our goal is to create a high tech, state of the art, flexible research space that can serve our own productions and scholarly presentations, and also become a laboratory for the entire university community. So at the same time as RiCAP is helping us break down walls that separate us from the community, we intend to tear down some actual walls on the second floor of Rarig to transform the Arena into a space that will serve the needs of contemporary creative and scholarly research university wide.

Underlying all of this is our commitment to ideas, which, in the end, are what a great educational institution is all about. We are dedicated to studying and teaching the dynamic interactions and intersections between creating, producing and thinking about the performing arts. We encourage our students and our audiences to be active learners and doers, which means thinking, making, understanding and engaging in theater and dance. We believe that we must prepare our students to be thinking artists and creative thinkers so that they can become both artist-scholars and engaged citizens.

This year’s production season illustrates our department’s distinctiveness quite well. The season offers six fully-produced works, each belonging to a different genre and done in a very different style. In November, *The War Within*...
Lou Bellamy and Penumbra’s Legacy
by David Bernstein

Penumbra Theatre founder and artistic director Lou Bellamy, who was also a revered faculty member of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, retired from the University of Minnesota last May after 32 years of service to the department and to the General College. As a teacher, a scholar, an actor, a director, a leader and an advocate for social justice, Professor Bellamy has influenced a generation of students, theater artists and audiences at the University and in communities across the nation. His retirement, which is undeniably a great loss for our students, has prompted us to reflect on his legacy and the legacy of Penumbra, the theater he founded in 1978 in a part of St. Paul’s old Rondo neighborhood.

To celebrate this joint legacy, we decided it was most appropriate to sponsor two main events that would honor the contributions Professor Bellamy has made to the University of Minnesota and the community, and the substantial impact Penumbra has had on African American Theater – at the UM, in the community, and nationally. At the first of these events, on February 22, 2011, members of the department and over 200 guests gathered in Willey Hall and the Elmer L. Andersen Library atrium for “A Tribute to Lou Bellamy,” featuring remarks by several University and community leaders, all of whom had been influenced by Professor Bellamy and his work. In addition to the very moving tributes, we used the occasion to formally announce the new Bellamy-Free Graduate Fellowship and the donation of the Lou Bellamy Rare Book Collection, a collection of over 800 works of African American literature that ranges from pre-emancipation works to contemporary fiction, which is now part of the Givens Collection held at the Andersen Library.

Bellamy himself delivered a very moving talk in which he described how, when he was a student in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, African American Theater wasn’t yet recognized as a legitimate field of study. That was one reason he founded Penumbra a few years later, with the goal of putting into practice the ideas of the Black Arts Movement that had so influenced his studies of the American theater, whether or not these ideas were recognized at the time for the profound impact they were having on the field of theater. He suggested that one way to celebrate his retirement, and at the same time cement Penumbra’s legacy as one of the nation’s foremost producers of Black Theater, would be to formalize the close relationship Penumbra continues to have with our department, which would help guarantee a permanent place for the study of Black Theater at the University of Minnesota.

We already have multiple connections with Penumbra: Bellamy himself, of course, as well as the many scenic, costume and sound designs faculty members and alums Lance Brockman, Mathew Lefebvre, Martin Gwinup and Kalere Payton have done for Penumbra shows. Penumbra Associate Artistic Director Dominic Taylor is a faculty member, and Penumbra staff members Jason Allyn-Schwerin (Technical Director), Julie McGarvie Unger (Communications Director) and Stephanie Lein Walseth (Education Programs Manager) are either alums or current students. Professor Taylor, who runs Penumbra’s new play development program, often involves our MFA design students in creating a model of the set, or even an installation, to accompany a staged reading of a new work. The August Wilson Fellowship, currently held by Carra Martinez, supports a graduate student to pursue her degree at the U of M...
and do critical and dramaturgical work for Penumbra productions.

One way to formalize Penumbra’s connection with the department – and at the same time honor Professor Bellamy’s lifetime area of theatrical study – might be for us to create a BA track for African American Theater. Such a track would replace or supplement some of the current Theater History requirements with African American Theater History, add courses from African American and African Studies on African American history and culture, and offer undergraduate BA students ways to connect directly with the practice of African American Theater through projects, internships or teaching classes at Penumbra.

The second event in the year-long celebration of Penumbra’s legacy is happening now, in the spring of 2012. Under the leadership of Dominic Taylor, the department is sponsoring a series of four public lectures and dialogues entitled “Reshaping the Black Image on the American Stage – A Case Study.” This lecture/dialogue series, which has received generous support from a University of Minnesota Imagine Fund Special Events Grant, examines the legacy of the Black Arts Movement (BAM) through the prism of an institution that emerged directly from this movement, namely, Penumbra Theatre Company. The series will address the directions this aesthetic movement took, as well as its historical significance and the efficacy of its attempt to reshape the image of Blacks on the American stage. All four lectures will take place at In-Flux Auditorium, room E110 Regis Center for Art, and feature a prepared talk by a prominent scholar and/or practitioner of African American arts and culture, followed by a public dialogue between Professor Taylor and the speaker about the issues the talk has raised.

The schedule for the lectures is as follows. On January 26 Lou Bellamy is featured with a lecture entitled “Penumbra’s Birth and the Black Arts Movement” that elaborates on many of the ideas he presented in his talk at last February’s retirement celebration, particularly about the ways that BAM informed the theater he founded in 1976. On March 1, scholar and dramaturg Sydnié Mahone, who currently teaches playwriting and dramatic literature at the University of Iowa, and served as director of play development at Crossroads Theatre Company from 1985-1997, will deliver the lecture, “Gender and Sexuality and the Black Arts Movement.” On April 19, renowned African American theater and cultural scholar, Harry J. Elam, Jr., who is currently Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at Stanford, will speak about culture as a commodity in a lecture entitled “Black Cultural Traffic and the Black Arts Movement.” And on April 26, well-known playwright, scholar and African American Theater historian, Paul Carter Harrison, will examine the sweep of Black Theater from BAM to the present and into the future, with a talk entitled “The Future of the Black Arts Movement.”

Each of the lectures will be about twenty minutes long. Because we want to emphasize that this series is as much a public conversation as a lecture series, there will be a forty minute period following each of the talks for a public dialogue in which the speaker will respond to questions posed by Professor Taylor that elaborate further on the points made in the lecture. Finally, there will be a fifteen minute question and answer session during which the audience can ask about, or comment on, the issues that have been addressed earlier. Each session will be recorded on video, and each speaker will provide a written version of their prepared remarks.

To help cement Penumbra’s legacy, Taylor intends to use the video and written documentation to produce a critical work about the history and future of African American Theater. This work, together with the more formal relationship between Penumbra and the U of M Department of Theatre Arts and Dance currently under discussion, will help guarantee that the legacies of Professor Bellamy and Penumbra continue to have an active life beyond the year of celebration that is ending this spring.

In a recent segment of NBC’s “Rock Center with Brian Williams” about Penumbra and Lou Bellamy, Professor Bellamy said: “Theater is the way I express my citizenship; it’s who I am.” We want to insure that this kind of passionate commitment remains a part of our department’s ethos, which will happen if this yearlong tribute to Lou Bellamy does indeed lead to an extensive partnership with Penumbra, the theater he founded to express who he is.
The Dance Program is very excited about having been able to present the 1937 classic, “How Long, Brethren?,” created by modern dance pioneer, Helen Tamiris, at this year’s Dance Revolutions concert, which was performed December 9-11, 2011 in the Rarig Center’s Proscenium Theatre. According to Dance Program Director, Ananya Chatterjea, “This piece was awarded Dance Magazine’s first annual award for modern group choreography [in 1937]. Created as part of the Federal Theater Project, which was sponsored by the U.S. Government’s Works Progress Administration Program in the 1930’s, the piece was painstakingly reconstructed by master teacher and artist Dianne McIntyre. Our students are extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Ms. McIntyre, a legendary name in American performance, for three weeks, researching, understanding, learning, and rehearsing the piece. Under Ms. McIntyre’s guidance, students were able to claim this history of the black South as part of a shared American history. Dancing this piece has provided our students ways to re-understand history, culture and politics as an embodied experience.” We are also quite pleased that Professor Chatterjea has been honored as the recipient of a very prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship for 2011.

Program Highlights

Dance Program

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MFA Program in Theatre Design and Technology

The Design/Tech program has been very involved in – and excited about – planning the high-tech renovation of the Kilburn Arena Theatre for which the department received a million-dollar Infrastructure Investment Initiative Grant last year. We are especially looking forward to the tremendous possibilities for teaching and creative research in theater design and technology that the flexibility of the space (and the state-of-the-art equipment planned for it) will give our students and faculty. To read more about the renovation, see the Kilburn Renovation article on page 30 in this issue of Applause.

Last year, Design/Tech students, staff and faculty attended the USITT Conference and Expo in Charlotte, NC held in spring 2011. Students and faculty also attended the Prague Quadrennial of Stage Design in June of 2011. The PQ was both enlightening and inspirational for all those attending, and Design/Tech Program Director Marcus Dilliard’s responses to the PQ were published in the October issue of American Theater magazine. Dilliard also received a Sage Award for Excellence in Dance Lighting.

Continuing our recent tradition of having guest professional designers and stage technicians teach specialized courses in the department, faculty member Andrew Saboe will be joined by Ryan Connealy, Assistant Lighting Supervisor at the Guthrie Theater, to teach an Advanced Graphics course this spring. And DJ Gramann, lead draper at the Guthrie, is teaching a year-long course in Costume Crafts and Millinery.

The Spring 2011 MFA Showcase was both well-designed and well-attended. The Showcase took place in the Experimental Theater and presented the wide range of talents of our MFA candidates. This year, the Spring 2012 Showcase will take place on May 7 in the Experimental Theater.

Our recent graduates are thriving. Kalere Payton, Costume Designer, has moved to New York City. She is designing off-Broadway and working as a fabric shopper for Carelli Costumes. Annie Katsura Rollins, Scenographer, has recently returned from her 10 month Fulbright Scholarship, during which she traveled in China researching traditional shadow puppetry. Annie Cady, Costume Designer, has been
very busy designing for Park Square Theatre, Yellowtree Theatre, Normandale Theatre and Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company, and working as an Assistant and Artisan for Children’s Theater Company. Rob Jensen, Scenic Designer, is the Technical Director for Park Square Theatre Company. Mark Larson, Lighting Designer, is the Executive Director and Resident Designer of Six Elements Theatre. And Jason Resler is the Costume Shop Manager for Stages St. Louis.

Our current students are also doing well. Mary Montgomery, second year MFA candidate in Lighting Design, was one of only six young designers from across North America chosen by ETC Lighting to receive a scholarship to attend the Lighting Dimensions International Conference and Expo in Orlando this past October.

And last but certainly not least, the Design/Tech staff worked weeks on end to guide our students through very successful fall productions of *The War Within/All’s Fair*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Uncle Vanya*, and University Dance Theater’s *Dance Revolutions* concert. In the spring, we are again very busy with *The Birds*, *Spring Awakening* and the Minnesota Centennial Showboat production of *The Vampire*, which will run for the entire summer.

### MA/PhD Program in Theatre Historiography

The MA/PhD Program had a banner year in 2011. Two faculty members were on leave with prestigious fellowships: Margaret Werry at the Freie University in Berlin, where she completed editorial revisions on her recently published book, *The Tourist State*, and Cindy García, who received a Ford Foundation Research Fellowship to complete her manuscript, *Dancing Salsa Wrong*. In March 2011, program alumni organized the Mid-American Theatre Conference, at which Program Head Sonja Kuftinec served as the theater history respondent, and visiting faculty member (and program alumnus) Will Daddario received honorable mention for the annual theater history essay award. During the conference, we celebrated the publication of alumnus Scott Magelssen’s co-edited anthology *Theater Historiography: Critical Interventions*, which features essays by a number of program graduates, including Patricia Ybarra, John Fletcher, Alan Sikes, and Rob Shimko, as well as faculty member Margaret Werry. Last summer, Professor Michal Kobialka’s book, *Further On, Nothing: Tadeusz Kantor’s Theatre*, received honorable mention from the Association of Theatre in Higher Education in its outstanding book award competition – the Association’s highest award for publication. This year, Professor Kobialka began serving a three-year term as Associate Dean of Faculty in the College of Liberal Arts.

Our current MA/PhD students participated in numerous national conferences and research abroad: Ivone Barriga in Peru, Pabalelo Mmila in Botswana and Kelly McKay in Chile. You can read more about Barriga’s and Mmila’s research projects in this issue of *Applause*. Both projects were funded by prestigious Compton Awards and Barriga is completing her dissertation this year with support from the competitive...
University-wide Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship. We anticipate graduating five new PhDs this calendar year. Current students, meanwhile, produced events such as Michael Mellas’ and Elliot Leffler’s devised piece, *Remembering 9/11*, performed on the event’s tenth anniversary in the fall of 2011.

Programmatically, we instituted a new initiative this year called Frameworks, which is a series of conversations designed to link our productions with scholarly inquiries. The series kicked off with Will Daddario, Barbra Berlovitz and Bob Rosen discussing Greek Tragedy and Comedy Today, urging us to consider theater as a space for “unforgetting” the truths we must keep rediscovering about who we are and where we are going. At a moment of global and local revolution, this reminder seems essential.

## BA Theatre Performance Program

We are quite proud that last year several productions involving students in the BA Performance Program received accolades both on and off campus. Our collaboration with the dance company Black Label Movement on *The Woyzeck Project* was named a top five show for 2010 by Minneapolis Star Tribune theater critic Graydon Royce. Our production of the original work *Oil! and The Jungle*, directed by Kym Longhi, sold out several performances in the Thrust. The Creative Collaboration entitled *The Wall*, led by Luverne Seifert and BA theater graduate Xanthia Walker was featured in the Minnesota Daily. And Gülgün Kayim’s production of *The Rubber Room* became a 24-hour performance piece that took place in a classroom at Southwest High School in collaboration with drama teacher Chris Fisher and his students.

This academic year’s production lineup is equally exciting. In October, Bob Rosen and twelve BA students created a performance piece based on Larval Masks that was featured in the Minnesota Daily. In December, Barbra Berlovitz and her Creative Collaboration students presented a highly physical version of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*.

This spring, Kym Longhi directed *Club Valhalla*, which is set in a cabaret outside of time where the voices of warriors, dead and alive, provide a theatrical exploration of warrior culture. In addition, Joel Sass, Carl Flink and Luverne Seifert will lead a Creative Collaboration about the monster Frankenstein in which theater, dance and art students will examine aspects of the “modern monster,” taking as a starting point Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

Last summer, our annual Stage Elements summer intensive workshop received a grant from the Arts Learning Program of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, administered by the Minnesota State Arts Board. This allowed us to offer more scholarships and increase the enrollment in the workshop from twenty to thirty students. Stage Elements featured as instructors T. Mychael Rambo, Sarah Agnew, Kym Longhi and Sonja Parks, all of whom are affiliate faculty members in the BA Program.

This year, our Wickedly Wild and Way Out Workshop Week featured internationally-acclaimed performance artist and member of the NEA Four, Tim Miller, who offered a six-day workshop for our students in January. Miller’s intent was “to share a variety of strategies to create original performances from the tremendous energies and stories that are present in our lives,” particularly those energies and stories that exist at the “charged border between our bodies and society.”

The BA Mentoring program, now in its third year, is designed to give BA theater majors and minors more rigor and guidance in their journey through the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. Artists who led workshops during the past year include performing artist Holly Hughes, Chicago puppeteer Michael Montenegro, New York’s Big Dance Theater, local Artistic Directors Dominique Serrand (The Moving Company), Rick Shiomi (Theater Mu), Michelle Hensley (Ten
Thousand Things), Peter Brosius (Children’s Theatre) and Michael Brindisi (Chanhassen Dinner Theatre).

As always, our faculty members are what make the BA program topnotch. This year we have added Sarah Agnew and Annie Enneking as affiliate faculty members. Sarah teaches Acting for Non-Majors and Annie teaches Stage Combat. Our full-time faculty members continue to be very active as both artists and teachers. Program head Luverne Seifert performed last fall in Workhaus Collective’s premiere of A Short Play about 9/11 at the Playwrights’ Center. This winter, he is on tour with The 39 Steps at the Arizona Repertory Theatre in Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona.

Lisa Channer spent last spring in St. Petersburg, Russia, on a Fulbright Fellowship, where she taught Creating the Performance and Physical Improvisation for Actors to students at the State Theatre Arts Academy, plus a course in Physical Improvisation to theater faculty members. During her visit, her company, Theatre Novi Most, joined her from Minneapolis and the group performed M2: Mayakovsky and Marinetti at The Dostoyevsky Museum Theatre and the Osobnyak Theatre. The show, performed in both Russian and English, was very well received. In March, Novi Most presented Picnic on the Battlefield, a “mash up” of the two plays, Picnic on the Battlefield by Fernando Arrabal and Enchanted Night by Slawomir Mrozek.

Michael Sommers spent a week in Kazakhstan last fall representing the U.S. at the international Almaty Puppet Carnival. His company, Open Eye Figure Theatre, performed A Parade of Oddities throughout the week and got wonderful responses.

Dominic Taylor wrote I Wish You Love, a play about singer Nat “King” Cole that was directed by retired faculty member Lou Bellamy. The show had very successful runs at Penumbra Theatre and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D. C. last spring – so successful that it was revived at Penumbra last fall where it played to sold-out houses.

Our students and graduates have also been very active in the Twin Cities arts community. Live Action Set received an Ivey Award for its production of The 7 Shot Symphony, which was directed by BA alumnus Ryan Underbakke, and featured performances by BA theater graduate Jenna Wyse and BA dance graduate Emily King. Children’s Theatre Company will again audition BA theater students to perform in its upcoming season. Last year BA student Julianna Drajko was featured in CTC’s production of Babe the Sheep Pig. And last summer, current BA student Alex Hathaway and recent graduate Justin Spooner performed Open Eye Figure Theatre’s Driveway Tour production of Juan Bobo.

We are very excited to have two permanent faculty members join the BFA Program: Bruce Roach, who teaches acting and D’Arcy Smith, who teaches voice. There is a faculty profile featuring the two of them in this issue of Applause, which you can read to learn more about our two newest faculty members.

Our graduates continue to perform professionally all over the country. For example, the cast of the Guthrie Theater’s recent production of Charley’s Aunt, directed by John Miller-Stephany, featured four BFA alums: Matt Amendt (’04), Valeri Mudek (’07), John Skelly (’07) and Ashley Montondo (’11), and two current Seniors, Ben Mandelbaum and Thallis Santesteban. The show was chosen as a showcase for the BFA Program, something that Guthrie Artistic Director Joe Dowling has done in the past as well. In addition, the Guthrie’s fall production of The Edge of Our Bodies featured Ali Rose Dachis (’09) playing its single character, Bernadette, while another fall production, The Burial at Thebes, which was directed by BFA and Guthrie movement instructor Marcela Lorca, featured Prentiss Standridge (’10) as Ismene and Ernest Bentley (’11) as Haemon.

Alums Santino Fontana and Aya Cash from our first graduating class in 2004 continue to act in theater and television in New York City and beyond. Other recent perfor-
Ken Washington, held alumni events in New York City and Chicago, where they both spoke to the gathering. We continue to try to keep up with our successful students, who, as you can see from the above list of recent performances by our alumni, are scattered around the country working in theater, film and television.

Bartl and BFA Program staff member Deborah Pearson traveled to London last October to visit the Junior Company, whose members were studying abroad for the Fall Semester. We met with the Globe Theatre, where our students spend much of their time, and also with several of our London-based teachers. In addition, we had some other meetings to explore potential partners. The students used their fall break to travel throughout England and Europe, and in November they presented their scene work on the Globe stage to an audience of family, friends and teachers.

Our priority continues to be to assist our very talented students on their artistic journey and support them in any way we can. Our ten-year partnership with the Guthrie continues to grow and expand; it is the envy of many undergraduate programs. You can read more about the UM/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program, and our partnership with the Guthrie, in “The BFA Program: A Ten Year Retrospective” which begins on page 16 in this issue of Applause.

On September 20, 2011 an event was held at the Guthrie for new University of Minnesota President Eric Kaler to meet the Twin Cities arts organizations. Joe Dowling was on hand to welcome and introduce the new President. At this event, Dowling, Kaler and CLA Dean James Parente all spoke glowingly about the BFA Program and its partnership with the Guthrie Theater. Another speaker was BFA alumnus and Guthrie performer Ernest Bentley, who spoke as a representative of the BFA program.

CLA Development Officer Joe Sullivan continued his successful fundraising, and celebrated our ten-year anniversary by organizing a party in Los Angeles, which was held in February 2011. Attendees included many University alums from all areas of the entertainment business. It was lovely to meet so many new people and to catch up with BFA alums. The excitement was evident and conversations have continued on ways to keep the momentum going and to maintain communication, while also reaching out to other U of M alumnus.

In addition to the event in L.A., BFA Program Director, Judy Bartl, and Guthrie Director of Company Development,
The three-story building at 1419 Washington Avenue South is a bit derelict, with the empty Gardner’s Pawn Shop on the ground floor and two floors of apartments above. However, for several years it housed an undergraduate artists’ collective that produced interdisciplinary and collaborative works, and showed these in a kind of underground way to audiences of students and community artists.

Art student Broc Blegan and theater student Brent Giralva had come up with the idea of renting the building as both a studio and a living space to save on rent and to promote artistic collaboration across disciplines. Broc, theater student Billy Mullaney, and musicians Ryan Murphy and Ben Yela ended up as the artists living in the building, but the collective associated with 1419 continued to grow beyond these four. “There were the two, and then there were five of us, which expanded to seven and then twelve. Then someone dropped so there were eleven, and then because we didn’t really want a leader for a long time, anywhere from fifteen to thirty people could really say that they were part of 1419.”

The founders also believed very strongly that U of M students in the arts need to develop some practice in the community outside of the University, especially as regards collaboration. “It’s really imperative for students to have an independent practice outside the University in order to put into practice the things that they are learning and also to learn how to collaborate.”

Things didn’t work out exactly as planned, however. “[We] didn’t really work together and it was difficult to come up with times when all of us could get together. Thus we weren’t working in that live-work situation we had envisioned.” Indeed, the first work shown at 1419 wasn’t created by any of the artists living in the space; it was a piece about Mars by U of M alumnae Samantha Johns and Savannah Reich. Once that first work was shown, “it started snowballing. A bunch of people came to see that show and several of them asked us if they could use the space as well. We thought: ‘Well, we’re not doing anything right now, so why not?’”

What had been started as a space for people to create interdisciplinary work collaboratively had turned into a space for producing other artists’ work.

The collective members were acutely aware
that this was happening, but because there was so much interest among artists to use the space to show their work, the 1419 collective kept making it available as a production space. “We kept having meetings [about] whether we wanted to continue to be a producing organization or were we going to go dark and work on our own things. [But] because the need organically arose for a space where artists didn’t need to have money in order to show their work, we continued to follow the track as a producing organization.”

As a space to show new work, 1419 continued to flourish, even though the members of the collective weren’t exactly sure why. “Publicity was mostly word of mouth and [since] there were no audience surveys [we never really knew] how people had heard about us, or why they came.” Probably audiences came “because there were so many outside artists coming, who would bring their audiences, [and these people] would return to see other shows.”

At its height, the 1419 space featured events regularly. “For several months we had at least one show every weekend. And we tried to supplement those with what we called ‘chit-chats,’ at which people got together to talk about the show, or about art, or about whatever. Towards the end, we curated a season of theater performances, and we would workshop them every week with people who were interested.” All in all, 1419 produced several memorable events, among them a visual arts gallery entitled Shoot the Moon and a pre-performance ‘dumb show’ for The Woyzeck Project, which was being shown at the Southern Theater across Washington Avenue from 1419.

There were plenty of advantages to having a space like 1419. By both living and working there, Mullaney pointed out that he was “paying rent to live in the space so [I didn’t] have to pay for another studio. And when you get rid of that expense, then you don’t need to sell tickets … so you can really experiment. What we made was space where we could … try things out on our own terms.” On the other hand, it proved too difficult for the artists to live and work in the same space.

In the end, it was too hard to sustain the collective for two reasons. First, the members living in the space had deviated quite far from their original intent by becoming producers – albeit producers of some exciting work – rather than working artists. Second, it became impossible for them to separate their work from their everyday lives. “When you live in a space where you work, it makes you crazy because there’s no separation. I remember not being able to compartmentalize work from life, and so needing to take a break. But I couldn’t take a break because I was always there.”

Moreover, the City of Minneapolis eventually found out about the public events taking place in the space, and warned them that since they did not have a license as a public space, they could be shut down if they persisted. Given that the space had by then become more a venue to show works to the public than a private artists’ studio, this created a major issue for the remaining members of the 1419 collective. And the collective members had begun to lose some of their enthusiasm for the idea, which they felt “had become institutionalized.”

Ultimately, the collective members abandoned the building, though they had all learned a great deal from the 1419 experience. They had learned that even in an arts-friendly place like the Twin Cities there is a real lack of inexpensive space in which independent artists can showcase their work. And they had discovered that 1419 had had a real impact on the community and on their own lives. “It was really important to see how deeply a community can be affected by just one space having an open-door policy. However, that came at the cost of the ability of the people living in the space to create their own work [since] they were doing a fulltime administrative job.”

For Mullaney, one particular memory of 1419 stands out because it speaks so strongly to the question of what is art. “One time – and I think this can only happen in a place like 1419 – Broc had organized a visual art show based on walls and building materials. When we installed it in 1419, the art looked all messed up, but because [the building was] full of messed up stuff, it was really hard to distinguish what was art...
Applause: I am sitting here having a conversation with the two newest faculty members of the UM/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program, Bruce Roach and D’Arcy Smith. Bruce was with us last year on a one-year appointment, and he is now one of two permanent acting instructors for the program. D’Arcy has come all the way from New Zealand to join the program as one of two voice instructors. So congratulations to both of you, and welcome to Minnesota. To start off, tell us a bit about your backgrounds in the theater and in theater education?

Roach: I started acting as a child – the old cliché of doing shows in the garage – and started working professionally when I was 17, so I’ve been doing it my whole life. I came into teaching through the back door. I come from a family of educators – my mother taught public school for 30 years – and, having been around teachers for my entire life, I thought that was the last thing in the world I’d want to do. But through my professional career, I started getting opportunities here and there to teach a class, to teach a summer in a performing arts school, that kind of situation. So I just fell into it and found out that I really loved it. I went to graduate school very late in my performing career, which allowed me to teach at the college level.

Smith: I didn’t want to be an actor originally. I saw myself more as a writer. I spent a lot of time writing and working in theater that way. In my high school years I had done some acting and where I was in college, in Toronto, Canada, there was no degree in playwriting so I auditioned for the acting company there and I got in, thinking I’d do this acting thing for a while and then get back to playwriting. But the acting bug really bit me and I kept at it. In my third year of actor training I turned to my voice teacher and said, “I think I want to do what you do” because I had terrible stage fright. At the ten-minute call, I would throw up; at the five-minute call, I would madly brush my teeth; and then at the call for places, I somehow pull myself together and stumble through that first scene. It was the voice work that really helped to ground me and focus me so that I could do the job. But my voice teacher said, “You need to go away. You’re far too young. Get some real experience.” So I went and acted for about seven years and then I called him up and said, again, “I want to do what you do.” And he said, “All right, you can come to apprentice with me.” I apprenticed with him for three years and that’s how I became a voice teacher. I had the voice teacher bug.

Applause: Can you talk about your pedagogy – that is, the theories and methods you use as a teacher?

Smith: I studied a number of different methodologies, the primary being Linklater voice technique. I have also studied the methodologies of Estill, Roy Hart and numerous others, all of which I use to try to help students in different ways. The main principle I try to put forward is mostly about critical thinking – getting the students to understand what it is that they are doing, and how do they repeat that thing so that they are less dependent on me. I want them not to feel that they have to keep coming back to me for the information, but rather that they feel empowered by the work that we do.
Roach: I think that’s a great thing; I’d like to build on that. As an educator, I think that our chief goal is teaching students how to teach themselves – to go beyond the information we give them. I look at the training as the beginning of their education as actors. Can we truly train an accomplished, finished actor in four years? Absolutely not! I think they’ll be training for the rest of their lives. So what we give them is a jumping off place. My own teaching is based in the Meisner technique because that’s what I was trained in during graduate school, and I’ve found that it’s a technique that merges well with lots of other techniques so I draw on several other master teachers as well in my own teaching. I don’t believe there’s such a thing as a director-proof actor, but I think we need to train assertive artists – people who know how to work on their own and bring what they do into the rehearsal process. I always tell an actor, “Don’t make me drag a performance out of you; that’s not my job as a director. I’m here to take what you bring and edit it into the performance.”

Applause: One of the features of this program is that it is an actor training program, but it’s in an academic setting. So the idea of critical thinking outside the field, not just within the field, comes into play for the students, since they need to study academic subjects as well as acting. How would you respond to this?

Roach: I think that’s a unique aspect of the training. We really do place conservatory-like demands on them, in terms of our expectations of the level at which they should be producing, and that’s terrifically challenging to them because they have very high demands placed on them in their academic course work here, which is different from the typical conservatory situation. Really, there is a lot expected of them in this program, but I think, because of that, we turn out better citizens. We know we turn out good actors, but we also turn out good people.

Smith: I think everyone knows that theater is going to change, and that the economic climate is making things different for the artist. So it’s really important that they are able to think for themselves – not just in terms of “how do I perform this piece?” but “what is the theater that I want to create?” and also, “how do I understand this text?”

Applause: What, broadly, are your current creative research interests, and what is one creative project on which you are currently thinking about, planning or working?

Roach: I think that it’s part of my job to maintain my professional status, to still be active in the professional world so that I don’t lose touch with what that is about because I bring that world into the classroom all the time. I always work professiona-
Faculty Profile: Will Daddario

An interview conducted on October 26, 2011 by the editor of Applause

Professor Daddario, an alumnus of our department who received his PhD in Theatre Historiography in 2010, is here on a three-year appointment while Professor Michal Kobialka serves his term as CLA Associate Dean for Faculty.

Applause: Can you talk a bit about the courses you are currently teaching and expect to be teaching at the U of M for the next three years?

Daddario: The primary course that I will teach is the Theater History sequence, TH 3171-72, the impossible history of the theater, stretching from the ancient Greeks to contemporary theater. It’s a big class with 75 BFA and BA students and so tends to be a lecture class. The other course that I’m teaching this year, and probably will teach on and off during the next couple of years, is Dramatic Literature, TH 4177 and 4178. That sequence has to do more with textual analysis than with historical background.

Applause: Do the students get any experience of performance in these courses?

Daddario: I currently don’t use any performance aspect. The primary idea in Theater History is to understand how a specific historical moment gives birth to a specific play. So in order to understand Sophocles’ Oedipus, you need to know what was happening in Greece at that time. And that historical time is different, say, than Seneca’s Rome, so when Seneca wrote his own Oedipus, the stories were similar but the world around the play was different. And this is what historiography asks us to consider – that specific time and place matters.

Applause: What, broadly, are your current research interests?

Daddario: Broadly, my research interests are Baroque Venice – that is, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Venetian theater performance – which is my dissertation topic. I also study contemporary intersections of philosophy and performance, more in a performance studies sense than a theater studies sense. I work on Theodor Adorno’s philosophy and also on contemporary manifestos: their intersection with philosophy, performance and politics.

Applause: What is one specific research project in which you are currently involved?

Daddario: I am working to turn my dissertation into a book that will be about Baroque Venice, which for me is Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Venice. A signature part of my argument is the definition of the Baroque period. Most people talk about the Baroque as coming later – the late Seventeenth to Eighteenth Century. But I try to think about it as a social movement, outside of its normal historical periodization, and outside of its definition as an architectural phenomenon marked by ostentatious design elements. I theorize the Baroque as a tension produced by, on the one hand, governmental regimes of discipline, and on the other hand, artistic forms of excess and expression. So the primary form of my argument is that, on the one hand, you had in the Sixteenth Century the founding of the Jesuits in Venice. In their education methods, they employed Spiritual Exercises, which are one on one, intense exercises involving a penitent and spiritual advisor, and which I treat as performance. So for example there was a public execution of a priest in Piazza San Marco that was, I argue, organized by the Jesuits, and I read that as them
“presenting” a performance of an execution for a specific purpose. I also read seemingly anti-theatrical tracts by Jesuits as pro-theatrical, and arguing for a certain type of performance in the world. On the other side are the plays of the Paduan solo performer Ruzzante who will be familiar to people who study Dario Fo because Ruzzante is one of Fo’s main influences. I read Ruzzante’s theater as a political type of theater that uses bawdy, excessive language to thwart disciplinary regimes in Venice. And I read his theater as an act of “taking place.” There were no permanent theaters in Venice at the time so Ruzzante was always invited somewhere to give a talk, and he always took that place and turned it into his own space where he could give his own insights about the world. For instance, he went to a place where a new cardinal or a new bishop for the Paduan region was being consecrated, and he’d say, “Oh, I’m here to congratulate you. By the way, though, I have these eight points of reform that I think the Catholic Church needs to undertake. Let me elaborate. I would like priests to stop having children with my wife so that I don’t have to feed them anymore. For example you, your honor, you have children, I believe. So you are an example of one of these people.” And somehow he got away with this because of his particular social status as sort of inside an elite circle but also outside of it. He had plays that were very fictional, but then he had these, which are not called plays. They’re just called dialogues or speeches, or better yet, they’re called orations, which is also a play on the Italian word for an oratorio or a prayer. So they’re pitched as him just performing. And I read Ruzzante and the Jesuits together; I fuse these two opposites to get a picture of Baroque Venetian performance.

Applause: What do you see as the difference between the approaches of Theater History and those of Theater Historiography?

Daddario: I draw an artificial line between history and historiography and say that a lot of times theater historians are interested in what specifically took place; they want to know when it happened, they want to know everything about the biography of the people involved—and I think that’s important. But, we also have to know a couple of other things. One, why in the present would we talk about these things at all? Historiography is concerned with bringing this historical moment into the present to talk about it. So what are we doing when we talk about these things? And, second, historiography is concerned with not just what happened, but what types of thinking at the time allowed for something to happen. So you couldn’t have had the York Cycle [of Medieval English] plays if there hadn’t been a specific church ideology that wanted people to embody the stories of the church.

Applause: How was your research influenced by the faculty members and/or fellow graduate students—or even by undergraduate students—in the department?

Daddario: I think I had the most models here for the way that research is conducted. I learned to treat research not as a black and white process of going to find information that’s out there. You need to be aware of the fact that research is contained and shaped in certain ways; that archives are unique perspectives; that they are not just storage houses, but rather that they were created for certain purposes, to keep specific information in place. And so when you go to do archival research, say, to a place like Venice, you need to be aware of the fact that you are stepping into an entire history of organization there; that there are records you are necessarily going to skip over by looking for other ones, and you have to consider that in doing your own research. That is a historiographical distinction—you are aware of how the archives are arranged, not just what the archives contain. And that’s a methodological and philosophic topic woven into our graduate program here which has influenced my thoughts. The way research is done and taught here is a hybrid because everyone here researches in a different way. The work and methods of Margaret [Werry], Michal [Kobaíkova] and Sonja [Kuﬁnec] are really distinct; yet together they form a very interesting asymmetrical research model.

1419 COLLECTIVE continued from page 11

and what wasn’t, especially since we didn’t have any wall text. So it was great to watch people go around the building and decide, ‘Oh, yes this is art’ and ‘Oh, that’s not art; it’s just part of the building.’ There was a rope in the stairwell that people were constantly talking about. Some thought it was a swing; others wondered why it was knotted at the end. But in fact it had been there when we moved in. That really influenced my thinking about art because I saw that people had just decided it was art, which showed the power of making a space where people feel empowered to decide that kind of thing about their surroundings. That was super exciting but also incredibly depressing.”

So 1419 Washington Avenue again sits deserted, the Gardner’s Pawn Shop sign still affixed to the front of the building. And most of the artists who lived or worked in it, including Mullaney, are still in the Twin Cities, looking for spaces to make and show their work.
The BFA Program:
A Ten Year Retrospective

An interview conducted on December 6, 2011 by the editor of Applause

Applause: The U of M/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program is a partnership between the region’s primary research university and its largest, best-known professional theater. Why did each of the partners decide to enter into this collaboration in the first place, in 2000, at the turn of the millennium?

Bartl: Well it was actually 1999; it was May of ’99 when the decision was announced.

Washington: I think the genesis of the program goes back to [former CLA Dean] Steven Rosenstone and Joe Dowling coming to town – at the same time as I remember. They both wanted to reinvigorate the partnership between the two institutions in a significant way. In my first day at work, I was made part of a task force that included people from the University and the Guthrie. We met for nine months discussing possibilities of what we could do to reinvigorate the relationship. The idea for the BFA Program happened in your office [Lance].

Brockman: Well this is the Brockman history. Actually the initiative for the BFA started with Nancy Houfek, who had taken over the MFA [Acting] Program, but said she thought it would be better to put our resources into a BFA done in partnership with the Guthrie. At the very first meetings after Joe got to town, [former faculty member] Stephen Kanee and I went down together to see what we could do to reinvent the old MFA Program. Joe Dowling looked across the table and, after we got through all the pleasantries, said: “I don’t know why I should be committed to the assistantships and the internships when in essence I have no say in the training.” And I said: “I can’t see a reason why you should.” His relationship to the Gaiety Theatre, [Houfek’s suggestion] for undergraduate training, and Ken Washington’s coming to town put it all in place. The parts were all there, and all Steven Rosenstone and Joe Dowling had to do was agree on the contract, and sign it … three or four times!

Applause: The BFA program very quickly became a national program. Which acting programs do you consider your peer programs, and what distinguishes this program from the others?

Lorca: I would say, Juilliard comes to mind immediately, North Carolina School of the Arts, Carnegie Mellon …

Washington: Boston University …

Bartl: I think pretty much any of the top tier BFA programs are really our peers in this program. What I tell prospective students about the highlights of the program include, first and
foremost, our partnership with the Guthrie Theater. I think that’s a huge distinction, and I believe that we are the only undergraduate program in the country that has this kind of extensive partnership. I think [another distinction is] the fact that we are a conservatory-like program in a liberal arts setting, so academics are a very important component of what we do here. We are a classically-based actor training program. We only take twenty students a year. They form a company and work together throughout their four years. Study abroad happens as part of our curriculum: it’s built right in. The entire Junior Company travels together to London in the fall semester. Another thing is that our work includes projects [as well as full productions]. That’s something that I talk to [prospective] students about, in response to the question that always comes up: “Do freshmen get to perform?” I try to explain to them, “Yes, you’re performing every semester with your company.” All of the work is very prescriptive; it comes out of the work that we’re doing in the classroom, and that’s where the projects are derived from. The casting is also very prescriptive; it’s determined by the faculty based on what each individual student needs at that particular point in their training.

Lorca: Very well said. The other distinction, I think, is that we don’t cut students from the program. When we accept a student we believe in that student and we are ready to nurture them and see them succeed all the way.

Washington: I think that covers it.

Brockman: Actually there’s one other important ingredient that makes this a program of distinction. Besides the relationship with the Guthrie, besides Ken Washington and Marcela Lorca, and all the great people [the students] get to meet, is having an administrator like Judy Bartl, who has brought focus and attention [to the program] and nurtured these kids in ways that are both healthy and compelling.

Lorca: Another thing, if I may add, is that part of their faculty works at the Guthrie and is in contact with professional productions and artists all the time, so they get the benefit of the exposure to professional productions at the Guthrie and artists of national caliber that are constantly coming to the Guthrie.

Applause: The auditions for the BFA program are extremely competitive. How many prospective students audition, how many are chosen, where are they from, and what type of student, if any, do you look for?

Bartl: Hundreds audition when we go out on our audition tour. But ultimately we only choose twenty students per year, and they’re from all across the country as well as globally. We’re now an international program: we have a student from Germany; we have a couple from Mexico; we have one from Canada. What type of student do we look for …?

Washington: Well they have to want to, and be able to, do both parts of the program, meaning not only the studio conservatory component, but they have to be interested in a liberal arts education. It’s a very full plate and you have to have a certain motivation to want to do all of that at once.

Brockman: I think that really was a central part when planning this program – the notion that this was not just a vo-tech training program; this was not a conservatory program. This was a program that brought the best of both institutions together, and to succeed at one and fail at the other meant that ultimately we would not really be very successful. Ken, you drove that home so many times and so well.

Lorca: I think because of that it attracts students that have a multiplicity of interests; that are not only interested in acting. We have a lot of students who take double majors. So we get very interesting people and people with a diversity of interests.

Applause: So the audition process is not just an audition. There must be some kind of interview or other components to get this kind of information about their wide-ranging interests and their commitment to the academics as well as the training.

Bartl: It’s really a multi-level process. They first have to apply to the College of Liberal Arts and be accepted there. And then when Ken and I first meet them and see their audition, we talk to them. We ask them about their interests; we try to get to know them as well as we can in fifteen minutes. And
then we also do a callback weekend here, where we'll invite fifty or sixty students and spend the weekend with them. They get a chance to talk to our students; we get to know them better; we see their auditions again; they go to the Guthrie; they see our students’ work. It’s a very full weekend for both sides to really get an opportunity to know each other better so they can make an informed decision.

Applause:

Now that the program has entered its second decade of existence, how has it changed over the first ten years?

Washington: Second decade … oh, my god.

Bartl: It’s 2011, Ken; we took our first class in 2000.

Washington: I think we are always trying to do what we do better. So there is constant tweaking of the curriculum.

Lorca: I think we learn from doing. We see what needs to be improved, and we’re very proactive in looking for improvement within the capacity that we have. I think that there are a lot of alumni out there now – there’s eight years of people who have graduated from the program – and they’re creating their own communities in L.A., New York, Chicago, Minneapolis. So there’s a network out in the world of alumni that our students can reach out to.

Applause:

Can you give me an example of one thing tweaked as a result of some practice that demonstrated change was needed, say, in terms of the curriculum?

Lorca: I think I think the fact that it’s a prescriptive program makes us ask every year, what is right for this particular ensemble? Every year the plans are different; the projects are different; the styles that we look for are different. So I think it’s constantly changing in order to really benefit that particular group of students.

Bartl: But I think at the same time, we’ve created a lot more structure within the program. So we now have greater flexibility to make changes based on the individual group. And when you talked about the alumni, [it reminded me that] the mentorship capabilities are immense. I always tell the students when I talk to them as incoming freshmen: you are so lucky to have these classes above you whose members can actually be role models for you. You can see where you can get to; you can look at what the seniors are doing and say, “I’m going to be that when I get to that point in my career, in my training.” Whereas the first group of students didn’t have that; they were it.

Applause:

Lorca: Guinea pigs …

Bartl: They really were. It changed things immensely.

Brockman: I met with that first class and was asked to say a few things as the Chair. I told them basically at that juncture we didn’t know quite what the destination was, so therefore we hoped they enjoyed the journey. It’s really been an evolution. They received something quite unique because they got [infused by] the energy involved in trying to solve the problem. And I think that for the current group of people, a lot of the problems have been solved, so that the energy is more streamlined. But I think both the beginning classes and the current class have received some great opportunities, including that semester in London, which I think for them, is absolutely golden. After Facebooking a few of them, I can tell you that their education [abroad] has been very broad …

Bartl: … in many ways.

Brockman: … in many ways, which I think is wonderful. What a great way to learn!

Bartl: Marcela calls them guinea pigs; I prefer to use the word “pioneers.”

Brockman: And that first group, they really faced the derision of most of the department, which was incredibly envious because they were being quote-unquote treated in a “special way.” It took a lot of deflection before the BAs and the BFAs finally felt they could function together.

Bartl: I think that’s a big change; now they have become more integrated into the department. And that’s been huge.

Applause: What in your opinion has been the single greatest
success of the program over its first ten years? What has been its greatest challenge?

Washington: I think money is a huge challenge – in terms of scholarships, in terms of the ability to hire guest instructors and guest directors. That’s my biggest worry, I think. We could do so much with a little extra.

Bartl: I think probably our biggest success has been our national recognition in really a very short amount of time. I think ten years is brief to be able to get to the place we’ve gotten to. That really comes from having this partnership between these two big organizations. And I also think the success of the students is one of our greatest successes: the fact that the students who leave here are productively employed in many different areas, and that so many of them are actually working in theater in one way or another – or creating their own art. That’s a huge testament to this program and the way these students are trained, [as is] the fact that they’re able to think creatively and be independent.

Lorca: I’d like to say also that the training has been proven to work in more ways than one. We instill in the students the idea that an artistic journey is a journey through life, and that they will continue to develop and grow after they leave here. They have understood that very well; they continue to be curious and seek learning and seek training and seek opportunities as they move on and continue to work. That’s wonderful to see.

Applause: Where do you see the program going during the next ten years?

Lorca: I think because we have to be on top of what every class needs, we also have to consider how the world is changing and evolving. We do that in an ongoing way: every six months we have very deep conversations about where our world is at; what do we need and what do our students need. So I think it’s more than where we are going in ten years. I like to think [the real question is] how do we keep evolving and how do we keep serving students? We must keep a vision that is not insular but relates to the world that we live in. I think being flexible is really a key to the success of the program.

Applause: The idea and the nature of performance itself have changed, certainly in the last twenty-five years. How do you see those changes operating in the BFA program? Is it still a classical actor training program?

Bartl: At its heart, it is still a classically-based actor training program, but, as Marcela said, we have the flexibility to be able to expand that repertory in order to respond to what else is out there – to how the students will be working when they leave here. And hopefully we’re preparing them for that. But what we teach is still really classically based. That’s what helps them to be more nimble when they get out into the real world.

Washington: In our early discussions, Lance and I were very aware of a need to have this experience not just involve the classical, but that it include some sense of the students’ times. So we’ve had a new play program as part of their curriculum since the beginning, and each class has had experience in working with playwrights of their own time. And through various workshops, including in London with the time spent at the LISPA – the London International School of Performing Arts – they get an introduction to training that is about creating one’s own theater rather than interpreting what’s already been written. So in those respects I do think students leave here not only with the sense of what has happened before, but what might happen in the future.

Lorca: The classically-based training that they get is very important and prepares them for any kind of work that they’re going to do. When people see the name of the school that they went to, they know that they have been well trained; they know that they have language and physical skills that enable them to tackle difficult material. So we prepare them with the hope that they will go into a wide range of work.

Washington: I was looking at a list this morning of all the theaters in the Twin Cities where our students have worked, and it’s amazing. The breadth of where they use their talents is very wide.

Bartl: I agree.
Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life

An interview with Professor Sonja Kuftinec conducted on November 15, 2011 by the editor of Applause

Applause: What is Imagining America’s purpose and why is it important to have hosted a conference in the Twin Cities?

Kuftinec: The full name of the organization is Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life. It’s a consortium of universities and colleges whose work in the humanities and arts intersects with public engagement projects. Its mission is “to animate and strengthen the public and civic purposes of humanities, arts, and design through mutually beneficial campus-community partnerships that advance democratic scholarship and practice.” That’s key to a public land grant university whose mission is to educate the citizenship. We are a department within that land grant university whose faculty members are involved in a number of artistic/scholarly projects involving mutually beneficial partnerships with the community.

Applause: What are some examples of the intersection of theater arts and public engagement within the department?

Kuftinec: Michael Sommer’s Open Eye Figure Theater hosts a summer driveway tour that is designed to get theater into different spaces rather than expecting audiences to come to places where they might not be comfortable, or they might not have the experience going to, which is a way of saying that theater can be something that is free and accessible and in your back yard. Lisa Channer’s work with Theatre Novi Most is designed to bring together Russian and American communities. Cindy García has a lot of links with Chicano Studies, whose work is deeply embedded in community-based contexts. She has also been a consultant on the Hyphe-Nations project coming out of Pangea Theater, which is working to bring together Latino immigrants with people who have been in the Twin Cities for a long period of time to listen to each other’s perspectives through theater. I have been working for several years with a project of the Children’s Theatre Company, Neighborhood Bridges, which is designed to engage middle school students in critical literacy through creative drama and storytelling.

Applause: What are some highlights of the conference around theater and its intersections with public engagement?

Kuftinec: The conference always has site visits in the host city, with the idea that you don’t just stay at the university, but also visit various sites of community engagement. One of those site visits was to the Heart of the Beast Theatre because that company has had numerous relationships with consortium members, including the University of Minnesota, Macalester and Winona State. At the site visit, we explored together the question of what do we mean by “the commons”? What is “common” and how can we conceive of common wealth as something other than just the resources of capital? So after some theater community-building exercises, Sandy [Spieler, artistic director of Heart of
the Beast] offered a presentation of some ways Heart of the Beast had investigated the question of the commons through arts and community-based puppetry. Then we all made puppets together. We made some really simple flat puppets of animals and created short performances in which the animals came together at a drum, which had itself been a plastic cover of a vegetable serving tray. The idea was to animate the principle of using whatever resources are available, to be sustainable in your art-making and life-making practices. One of Heart of the Beast’s aesthetic principles is to use simple materials and existing neighborhood resources as a way of sustaining and building community. The work of that company emphasizes using the wealth of a community to make art, rather than having the company – or a group of university art makers – bring in art and show it to the community, as though the outside art makers have all the creative wealth.

Applause: What are some of the other conference highlights or special moments?

Kuftince: There was a lunchtime conversation about telling river stories, and one of the participants was Mona Smith, who is a Dakota multimedia artist with whom I have worked on various classroom projects. She was sharing her project “Telling River Stories,” which is grounded in a Dakota principle that we are all related – as human beings, and also to the earth and to the resources that are around us. So you must treat yourself and all of your relationships with care and reciprocity. Using this ethic, the project featured the reciprocity of relationships with the land and the recognition that the Dakota people, the original inhabitants of the land, have often been made invisible because of the way that land has been mapped by different systems of representation. Her project is about re-mapping the space of Minnesota with stories of the Dakota people’s relationships to the land. It also offers a different understanding of mapping itself, so that mapping isn’t just about setting boundaries, but understanding relationships that emerge through stories. The project involves a podcast, so you can go to different sites and listen to different stories. For me, the project was also about making visible the idea that indigenous artists aren’t just making folk art and pots, but are also using digital multimedia technology in order to take these connections back to the land. The project’s U of M connection is that Mona had worked on it with Patrick Nunnally, who runs the River Life Project of the University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment.

Another moment for me that was really important was an ethnic studies panel that was put together by Luis Mendoza in Chicano Studies and Lisa Sass-Zaragosa, with two community members – one from an organization called Tamales y Bicicletas. The community members were able to speak for themselves about the scholarship and knowledge generated through their work. There were also some vital comments about what it means to be in alliance with people who are struggling to tell their own stories, about some of the major principles of the organizing that Chicano Studies has been engaged in, and about how to organize people through their own self-interest towards movement-building. So they are really practicing the notion of public scholarship by having the community scholars in the room.

Finally, the keynote presentation brought together Rose Brewer, a professor in African American and African Studies, and Seitu Jones, a visual artist working in the Twin Cities who has also taught at various colleges and universities (he is a graduate of the U of M). The keynote was co-sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Study under their thematic of abundance and scarcity, and it is connected to a project that Rose and Seitu are engaged in on Black environmental thought. Rose and Seitu made the point that sustainability initiatives are tied to historical civil rights movements. Seitu talked about how the Civil Rights, Black Arts and Black Power Movements all have a shared ethic of leaving communities more beautiful than one found them, and that like the Dakota principle that we are all related, sustainability is connected to people, not just to resources.

They asked some generative questions about public scholarship and university-community relationships that invited us to think about the idea that civic engagement is not a
In the summer of 2007, Ivone Barriga was engaged as a theater instructor at the school run by Puckllay, a community-based theater company in Peru that operates in Lomas de Carabayllo, a collection of fifty-two poor shantytowns in the northern part of the capital city of Lima. She got to know the theater group and the people they work with – mainly children and teenagers and their families – and “saw some interactions that I found fascinating.” So when, a few months later, she came to graduate school at the University of Minnesota, she started to think about that project from a critical perspective, and how it related to her theater studies as a PhD student in our department. In particular, she began to think “not just about the project, but about Peruvian society, and how this project participates in social dynamics; that is, the nature of the social change that community-based theaters such as Puckllay produces in Peru.” Thus her current research interests evolved from her involvement with the community-based theater group she is now studying, first as a practitioner and then as a theater scholar.

Barriga conducted her research during the 2010-11 academic year, which she spent in Peru on a CIC (Committee on Institutional Cooperation) Fellowship. She did extensive field work as a participant-observer with Puckllay in the shantytowns of Lomas de Carabayllo. She also conducted interviews with the directors of the project, some instructors in the school, the youth participants and their parents, and did some archival research as well. She discovered several important things about the purposes, activities and work of the company, including how their work connects the arts to Peruvian social conditions.

The company itself, whose name, Puckllay, comes from the Quechuan word for “playing,” sees the project as a way for the youth of the shantytowns to “learn through playing,” something young people do not get in Peru’s formal education system, and also as a way to create “interactions between the shantytowns and the city.” To do this, the project focuses on three main activities. “The first is the school for arts, which works locally with children and youth. Then there is a community arts festival, which takes place in one of the shantytowns, and tries to bring people from the city to the shantytown to become a local audience – or at least to witness the social conditions in which the project works. The third is the theater productions that Puckllay produces, mainly in the city.” The aim of the school, beyond teaching young people various artistic disciplines, is to try to get the students to use art to reflect “about some of the conditions under which the community lives, such as, for example, the huge problem of pollution” in the shantytowns. In short, the classes also teach ways of “using art to trigger social change.”

Another goal of the project is to “open up social spaces” for the participants. “Puckllay is trying to bring some possibility of a better life for some of the participants. For example, there are some people who want to become artists because of their participation in this project.” And the community
service a university provides to a community but a mutually beneficial relationship. And they made the point that in the past, a lot of public scholarship and civic engagement projects have operated by defining community in terms of pathology – that there is a problem the university can help to solve instead of understanding that what communities need is to be in relationships. Seitu referred to a history of communities being pathologized and pushed and prodded and put under a microscope by universities, which can be termed higher education drive-by, rather than the long term relationships universities need to forge that recognize the wealth of communities, not just their pathology.

One of the ways that he is trying to build this in his art-making is through the metaphor of a seed. He invited us all to participate in a project he has that is organized around collard greens, which are sustainable and growable and tied to the Black environmental idea of reconnecting African Americans to the land. So he gave everyone a collard green seed at the end of the talk, inviting us to plant that seed and nurture it and take pictures of it. Those pictures will eventually be mounted on a Facebook page, making project participants part of a digital community.
Graduate Student Profile: Pabalelo Mmila

Interview conducted on November 7, 2011 by the editor of Applause

Applause: What are the essentials of the research project that you undertook last year? Where did you go? What groups or individual artists did you study? What kinds of approaches did you take (e.g., ethnographic studies, archival research, interviews, observation, etc.)?

Mmila: I’m using ethnography and archival research as well as text analysis. I examine the role of women as both producers and beneficiaries of popular theater in post-colonial Botswana, paying attention to how they independently, in collaboration with or in opposition to the state, use popular theater as a site of political and social agency. I try to inquire into how popular theater can operate as a tool of top-down communications for state-identified concerns, as well as a tool of community organization for marginalized members of society such as women. I worked with two theater companies. One is the Youth Health Organization Theatre Company (YOHO) that is based in the capital city of Gaborone, in a poverty-stricken part of the city. The other is called the Moremogolo Extension Theatre Group and it’s located in one of the mining towns, Jwaneng.

Applause: Tell me a bit about the composition of the theater groups.

Mmila: Both groups have young men and women in them. In YOHO at that time there were seven men and four women. In Moremogolo, there were fourteen, with a majority being women. All were out of school youth – middle school and high school dropouts. So they have many problems, and we talked about the issue of what does it mean to be a young, poor, unemployed Motswana woman. Because when you look at poverty and HIV, you see a strong connection. We’ve also talked about why it’s seen as okay for a man to be promiscuous but for a woman, it’s a mark of shame.

Applause: What ideas about theater and/or culture are you trying to get at with this project?

Mmila: In the context of Botswana, this project fills a knowledge gap relating to women and theater. I am hoping it will give us access to the ideas and the events that are important for understanding women, individually or collectively, in theater in Botswana. I am also hoping to point at the relationship between theater and the state through funding because on the one hand, the state uses theater to communicate its agendas while at the same time communities can use popular theater to communicate their own agendas. I am interested in what happens when the artist and the state collaborate, and for this I’m using Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s theory on the antagonistic relationship between the state and the artist, where he argues that a lot of times the state uses its power to silence social criticism. The artist, on the other hand, relies on the power of performance to give a voice to silenced communities. So what happens when these two are in collaboration? How do they negotiate a conflict, such as when the state is identified as one of the causes of the oppression of communities?
Applause: So what have you found out about the somewhat ambiguous relationship between the artist and the state?

Mmila: It’s interesting because the government of Botswana at the onset of the Twenty-first Century, when there were a lot of historic changes, came up with what they called “The Vision 2016 National Program” which lays out the state’s aspirations and dreams for the coming century. And what they do is to try to communicate this vision using all modes of entertainment, including theater. They either find theater companies for this purpose, or, sometimes, theater companies come to them for funding to communicate their own ideas. So a lot of times funding creates tension; it creates skepticism; it creates mistrust. And, because of my work with the two theater companies, sometimes I find myself implicated in these types of tensions.

Applause: How has your time here as a PhD student prepared you for a project of this nature? That is, how are you using what you’ve discovered as a graduate student to develop and engage in the research questions you hope to address, your research methodology, and the content of the research itself?

Mmila: The program has really shaped my agenda towards finding the voices of women in history. And theater historiography and other theater classes have forced me to ask – every time I encounter a text, I have to ask myself – Who writes this text? For what purpose? What is the agenda? And how does this influence how to write about what to write about? And what does this narrative include? Who does it exclude? And, concerning ethnography, my studies have forced me to ask myself questions about my social or cultural affirmations and how these inquiries frame the interpretations and the assumptions that I make about my research participants. Also, the ethnography class I’ve taken has forced me to expand this to my research participants in such a way that when I observe what I observe, and listen to them talk about their experiences, I’m able to relate these personal experiences to the larger societal structures of power – to ask myself, how did these societal structures or programs come to be experienced as personal experiences. So I draw a link between the personal and the societal.

Applause: And then you see how the personal is performed by the group?

Mmila: Yes, yes, and it allows me to understand the context outside the actors’ experience and to look at the text from a gender perspective. It allows me that lens.

Applause: What is the most memorable experience you had during your research field work? What is the most surprising thing you’ve discovered so far – for instance, something that was very different from your expectations?

Mmila: Part of what I look at is the problem of being a “native” scholar, a “local” ethnographer. As a Motswana woman academically trained in the United States, I occupy a unique position as both an insider and outsider. So I find myself negotiating my position in different contexts. There was one moment that was the most humbling experience of this research project. I was talking with the YOHO theater group members before a performance (I usually hold a workshop with the participants before a performance where we get to talk about personal issues and daily life experiences). And one of the new kids revealed her HIV status to me. And in that moment, I saw my role change from that of a researcher to that of a friend and confidante. In that moment I gained access into the lives of these young kids. They were very happy that I had allowed them the platform to talk about their lives because nobody had ever done that. But for me, I saw my role diminish – shift – from that of a researcher to that of a friend. And from then on when I saw those young women perform on stage, I saw them performing themselves. For me it became a situation where people played people – they played themselves – and that was a revelation for me.

Applause: Is it unusual for someone to reveal this sort of personal information?

Mmila: Yes, because of the stigma attached to HIV, hearing someone talk about her HIV status was very humbling for me.

Applause: Do you think that theater is helping make the young women feel more comfortable with being public about their HIV status?

Mmila: Yes it has, yes, to some extent, yes.

Applause: Your discussions with the young women suggest that you found material for your research both onstage and offstage. Can you talk more about that?

Mmila: I focused on both the onstage performances, which are public, and the offstage “performances” which are more private, particularly for the young women in the group. Sometimes I divided the group by gender and had private meetings with just the women to talk about everyday issues and concerns. This was a way of encouraging offstage “performances” that complemented the onstage performances where they cannot reveal too much about their personal lives.
A Year of Milestones
by David Bernstein

Anniversaries that are multiples of five are usually the ones celebrated, and some of you will recall that in 2006, we dedicated our season to celebrating 75/20, the seventy-fifth season of University Theatre and the twentieth of University Dance Theatre. Now, five years later, UT is 80 and UDT 25. We are also approaching the tenth anniversary season of the new Minnesota Centennial Showboat, which was reincarnated on Harriet Island in 2002 after a tragic fire destroyed the old showboat as it sat in dry dock in the midst of a major renovation. And last year marked the tenth birthday of the UM/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program, to which another article in this issue of Applause pays homage.

In short, we have reached several milestones during the 2011-12 season, which might have been dubbed 80/25/10/10 and celebrated as such formally, except that it didn’t really make sense to focus too heavily on anniversaries so soon after 75/20.

Nonetheless, while we are noting these milestones more than celebrating them, they give us pause to reflect on where we are production-wise as a department. Such an assessment is particularly important in view of our growing commitment to creating a department without walls through RiCAP (Reimagining Community and Arts Partnerships), an initiative under which we are building partnerships with the very diverse, rich Twin Cities artistic and cultural community – a structure that we think will offer our students unparalleled production opportunities.

Last year we participated in four collaborative RiCAP projects. First, our students and faculty teamed up with members of Carl Flink’s dance company, Black Label Movement, and some independent community artists in a production of The Woyzeck Project at the Southern Theater, which Star Tribune Theater Critic Graydon Royce named a top five show for 2010. Second, UDT did their annual Dance Revolutions concert at the Southern, which was the first time in memory that our students performed a UDT (or a UT) show at a community venue. Third, three of our students – Ariel Donahue, Margaret Johnson and Billy Mullaney – performed in Joe Chvala’s Flying Foot Forum production of Heaven at the Guthrie Studio. And fourth, we collaborated with the U of M Institute for Advanced Study and the Playwrights’ Center to co-sponsor a mini-course taught by playwright Leigh Fondakowski.

This year we are capping off the 80/25/10/10 season by an extensive RiCAP collaboration with Theater Latté Da on the hit musical, Spring Awakening, directed by their artistic director, Peter Rothstein, with musical direction by Denise Prosek, and choreographed by our own Carl Flink. The production of Spring Awakening will be our first full RiCAP collaboration with a professional company done in-house at the Rarig Center. This is a crucial step for RiCAP, which we have always envisioned as a set of “inside-outside” partnerships that include both invitations to community artists and organizations to join us inside Rarig and the Barker, and projects more like last year’s RiCAP collaborations that offer our students and faculty members opportunities to engage with community artists and organizations at off-campus venues.

The Latté Da partnership provides an excellent template for how and why RiCAP projects can be mutually beneficial to the partners. When Rothstein saw the New York production of Spring Awakening, he noticed that audience reaction to the show was “electric,” both pro and con, a reaction he wanted to recreate in the Twin Cities. He also thought that this edgy, vibrant, alive show would be a wonderful vehicle for the kind of young talent that abounds in our department. So what better place to look for a cast than in a university theater department?

For our part, even though much of our pedagogy is focused on expanding the idea of what constitutes theater and...
dance performance, musicals continue to be very popular with our students, besides being an important, much-performed genre of American theater. And what better way to learn about musical theater performance than by working with Latté Da, whose mission is to explore and expand the art of musical theater, and whose co-founders, Peter Rothstein and Denise Prosek, are two of the Twin Cities leading lights of musical theater production? So our students get to do a musical – something that always excites them – and they also get to work with a professional director, musical director and choreographer, as well as with professional actors.

This project is a true collaboration between equal partners, not simply an internship opportunity for our students to work with a professional company. We are contributing a group of talented, age-appropriate students to play the young people in the cast. The choreographer is our chair, Carl Flink; the scenic designer is MFA design student Jonathon Offutt; and the assistant director is a TAD student. The show will be performed at our facilities – the Thrust Theatre in the Rarig Center. Latté Da is contributing the overall artistic concept and vision, as well as Rothstein as director, Prosek as musical director, and professional actors to play the adult roles.

Besides being a model for one type of RiCAP collaboration, the show itself is no fluff musical. Rather, it is a dynamic rock adaptation of Frank Wedekind’s 1891 play, which looked at a group of teenagers coming of age at the height of Victorian-era sexual repression. This musical really captures the conflict between youth sensibility and adult ideology; that is, between what young people see and desire, and what adults expect of them and for them. It is also innovative as a musical, according to Rothstein, because the songs stop the action and comment on it, as opposed to the more traditional musical in which the songs carry the story forward.

Spring Awakening caps off what has proved to be quite a diverse academic year season of fully produced works, each of them done in a very distinct style – as befits this quadruple anniversary year. The season kicked off with the newly-devised, improvisationally-created contemporary comedy, The War Within/All’s Fair, developed by our students under the direction of former Jeune Lune artistic directors Dominique Serrand and Steve Epp. It continued with the classical, visually stunning repertory production of Chekhov’s masterpieces, The Cherry Orchard and Uncle Vanya, featuring strong characterizations by the UM/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program’s Senior Company. The annual UDT concert, Dance Revolutions, followed, featuring some exceptional dancing by our students and evocative choreography by Dance Program Director Ananya Chatterjea, Stephen Petronia, Uri Sands, and modern dance legend Helen Tamiris.

In 2012, the politically-charged production of Aristophanes’ ancient Greek comedy, The Birds, directed by former Jeune Lune stalwart, Bob Rosen, held us in thrall for a few cold winter evenings and reminded us, amid the bizarre twists and turns of this national election year, that we’re still fighting some of the same political and cultural wars as the ancient Greeks. So, while we have chosen not to celebrate in any formal way the set of production milestones reached this year, the productions themselves have made this a very special season – one worthy of the 80/25/10/10 years of productions and training that we are marking during the 2011-12 year.
Introducing the New Faculty & Staff

Dennis Behl, Communications and Media Director, brings a variety of professional experiences to the department. Having served as the Guthrie Theater’s Director of Press and Public Relations for over fifteen years, he launched his own consulting firm working with local, national, and international clients including the U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Park Service, The Russian Farm Community Project, the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art, the University of Minnesota’s Weisman Art Museum, KTCA-Public TV, Minnesota Dance Theatre, and Triple Espresso to name a few. He holds a doctoral degree in theatre from Kent State University, and has served on the adjunct faculty at Normandale Community College, Augsburg University, and Cardinal Stritch University.

Hannah Carney is the Executive Office and Administrative Specialist in the Dance Program. Before accepting this position, she worked in Disability Services at the U of M for two years. She is currently enrolled in the M.Ed Adult Education program of the College of Education and Human Development and looking forward to learning more about Theatre Arts and Dance. Outside of work she enjoys coaching a Special Olympics team and working on her house!

Will Daddario is currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre. He teaches undergraduate Theatre History and Dramatic Literature. His primary research is sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Baroque Venetian theatre and performance. He has recently published articles in Performance Research, Ecmenias: Journal of Theatre and Performance, and the Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism. Prior to entering academia, Will studied acting in the Experimental Theatre Wing at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. The knowledge gained both from his actor training program and his study of theatre historiography informs his practice as a dramaturg and theatre theorist.

Margaret Guilfoyle (Peg) is currently Interim Producing Director for the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. She oversaw this past season’s Showboat production of The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, and is responsible for the current academic year season of productions of all types. Peg was the Guthrie’s Production Stage Manager and Production Manager from 1980-1990. Her consulting company, Peg Projects, has a long history of managing complex projects with multiple components. It has been responsible for writing, producing and publishing award-winning regional history books for private and corporate clients (the Guthrie Theater, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minnesota Telecom Alliance, Northern Star Boy Scout Council). The company has worked extensively on general project management, including public relations and marketing (Cedar Pet Clinic Lake Elmo, for which Peg serves as Co-owner and Senior Manager), emergency project planning (the Minnesota Department of Health, 2006), and construction project supervision (Triple Espresso Company, 2007). Peg Projects’ specialties are team creation and leadership, and the management of diverse short- and long-term projects, including project development, scheduling and budgeting.

Iryna Podolyan has been a Senior Accountant in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance since May, 2011. Iryna came to the University of Minnesota from the private sector where she worked for over three years as an Accounting Specialist. Prior to that, she lived in Jackson, Mississippi and worked at Jackson State University, Department of Chemistry, as an Accounting and Administrative Specialist while working on her MBA Degree. Iryna is married and has one son who started kindergarten last year. When not working, Iryna loves to spend time with her family and attend different sports events.

Millie Reid is our new Department Administrator. She has worked as a Personnel Specialist in CLA Human Resources since 2006 (working directly with the Theatre Arts & Dance department) and prior to that also worked in the central University of Minnesota Human Resources Office for nine years. She also worked for three years in the education department of Charthouse Learning International.

Bruce Roach is currently on the faculty of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program. His work as an actor, director and educator has taken him across the U.S. and abroad. He recently played the title role in King Richard the Third with the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival where he also appeared in Othello, The Merry Wives of Windsor and King Henry the Fifth. He has served on the full-time faculty of The Asolo Conservatory and the Savannah College of Art and Design. He taught and directed at the Lacoste School in Provence, France. For five years he served as the Head of the Theatre Program at Perry-Mansfield School in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. While there he founded New Noises, a workshop for new plays which continues to unite playwrights, composers, directors and performers from around the world in a unique mountain setting. As an actor and director Roach’s work has been seen at theaters around the country in works as diverse as Brecht, Pinter, Williams and Shakespeare.

Roger Rosvold joins the department as Interim Technical Director. Most recently, Roger was the Operations Manager for the Sesame Street Live touring shows. He holds an MFA from Tulane University and served on the faculty of Concordia University-Saint Paul and Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. He has worked as a carpenter/welder with the
FROM THE CHAIR continued from page 2

All's Fair featured 15 of our students working with Dominique Serrand and Steve Epp of the Moving Company (and formerly with the Tony Award-winning Theatre de la Jeune Lune) to create a wild comic, poetic and tragic show that wrestled with the contemporary existential moment within which our students find themselves. In a more classical vein, guest directors Joseph Price and Sari Ketter worked with the BFA Senior Company to give us very intimate, stunning repertory performances of Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard and Uncle Vanya in the Arena Theatre. A dynamic Dance Revolutions concert in December featured work choreographed by Ananya Chatterjea, Stephen Petronio, Uri Sands and Helen Tamiris. In the Spring, Bob Rosen, another former co-artistic director of Jeu- ne Lune, directed a biting, satirical and very physical production of Aristophanes' The Birds, which will be followed by Spring Awakening, directed by Latté Da's Peter Rothstein, choreographed by myself, and featuring a mixed cast of professional and student actors. And this summer, The Vampire! will stalk the Showboat, directed by Peter Moore with olios directed by Vern Sutton.

But these are far from the only production opportunities for our students and our audiences. We offer a great many partially-produced works and classroom projects as well, all of them performed free and open to the public. The Xperimen
tal Theatre Season, a series of entirely student-run and student-produced works, is ongoing throughout the year in the “X,” featuring works ranging from an all-female Hamlet to Diana Son's Stop Kiss to the original student work, Tea Party. The Dance Program will offer audiences a Spring Concert, several informal showings and the annual Student Dance Coa
tion Concert. The BFA Studio Series includes performances in a variety of genres: from 20th Century drama (Arthur Miller’s The Crucible) to Greek Tragedy (Euripides' The Bacchae) to Shakespeare (The Tempest and Pericles). Original performances in the BA Creative Collaboration Series include adaptations of Aeschylus' Oresteia trilogy and Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein, among others. And, to ground all these in scholarship, we have started a new discussion series called “Frameworks” that engages students and faculty in conversations around essential questions raised by the productions in order to provide a context of ideas for the artistic and production work.

This dizzying array of artistry and scholarship has become the rule in the department of Theatre Arts and Dance, which is one thing that truly distinguishes us from theater and dance programs throughout the country. It certainly inspires me, and it is my hope that it captures your imagination, your passion and your interest as well. I say this because your active support will help guarantee our growth as a department that leads the way in defining the future of the field of theater and dance, and also in showing what a contemporary research university can look like.

Intrigued by all this? Then I urge you to visit our web
site at http://theatre.umn.edu/, where you can find out more about our students, our faculty, our public performances and other events. Better yet, call me directly at 612-626-1049, or e-mail me at flink003@umn.edu. Best of all, come visit us – to see a show, or meet our faculty and students, or just to walk around the West Bank Arts Quarter. After you do, I think you’ll agree that we offer our students – and the community we live in – an outstanding theater and dance education and some extraordinary performance experiences.

Best wishes for a great Spring Semester!

Carl Flink
Chair, Department of Theatre Arts and Dance
The New Kilburn Theatre: 
A Dynamic Space for Contemporary Creative Research

by David Bernstein and Joe Sullivan

Imagine a multiuse, flexible performance space that can accommodate theater and dance performances, public presentations and multimedia research projects, seats 125, and has state-of-the-art technical capabilities. That’s what the new Kilburn Arena Theatre will be after a two million dollar renovation of the current theater on the second floor of the Rarig Center.

Not only will this be the first major renovation of one of our facilities in Rarig since the building opened in 1973, but it will be an important site for Twenty-first Century creative research – the only one of its kind on campus. For years, we have been educating the academic community about the research we do – which includes both the theoretical, scholarly and archival work familiar to scholars in the humanities – and creative research, which some of our colleagues in the academy have seen as replication rather than original research, or even as the making of entertainment rather than as a way to think critically about the world by performing it. Having the remodeled Kilburn as a performance and production laboratory will give our faculty and students the means to experiment with performance – and show their investigations to the public – all of which will help define by example what creative research is and can become.

The need for such a space became apparent once the four arts disciplines of art, music, dance and theater found a common home in the West Bank Arts Quarter. During discussions about how to inspire and support collaborations between the various disciplines, we realized that there was no real laboratory space to both develop contemporary cutting-edge collaborative work and then show the results publicly in the same facility. So when the U of M Office of the Vice President for Research developed the Infrastructure Investment Initiative grant program (the I3 program) last year, and sent out a call for proposals that were designed to build the infrastructure needed to promote and support new research initiatives, we saw a chance to create just such a space, and applied for an I3 grant. We were awarded a million dollars – the only arts or humanities project to receive an award. The College of Liberal Arts (CLA) committed an additional $500,000, and just like that we were three-quarters of the way toward securing the two million dollars the project has been estimated to cost.

The CLA Development Office is currently in the process of raising the remaining funds (see “Please ‘Take A Seat’ at the Kilburn Theatre” on the next page), and we anticipate beginning construction in the spring of 2013, with the facility ready to use that fall.

Features that make the Kilburn special include:

- **Movable seating:** A mix of flexible and fixed seating for 125 audience members, creating an intimate theater space.
- **Fully-sprung floor:** A first in a Rarig theater space, this type of floor provides a more supportive and safe surface for our very physical style of dance and acting.
- **LED lighting grid:** A state-of-the-art lighting system that allows every color of the spectrum to be explored, enhancing theater and dance performances for actors and audiences alike.
- **Sound and video:** Outstanding audio and video projection equipment, opening up a world of new distance learning opportunities.
- **Storage:** Effective in-space storage to reduce damage and strain on the equipment, while keeping it safe and secure.

The flexible seating, with moving banks and one fixed bank, will allow the space to accommodate arena (theater-in-the-round) style seating and various other arrangements, including one with the moving banks stored, which will provide the open space needed for the theater to be used as a production/performance laboratory. The sprung floor will allow for dance and physical theater to be developed and performed, with or without an audience. The technical equipment will give artists from all disciplines a chance to create and show contemporary work, including interdisciplinary and collaborative projects for which there currently no University facilities with the flexibility and sophistication that we plan for the Kilburn Theatre.

And while we will certainly make good use of the Kilburn, we recognize that its uniqueness as a space for creative research – indeed, for the presentation of research of all kinds – will make it very attractive to other members of the university community. So when we wrote the I3 grant, we included a plan under which other departments and disciplines will be able use the renovated space. As department chair Carl Flink put it in the “Comprehensive 2013 Unit Plan” he prepared for
CLA, “one of the key elements of TAD’s successful Infrastructure Investment Initiative grant . . . is [a] partnership with the Institute for Advanced Study to schedule dynamic and innovative research workshops and presentations from across the University and the larger public beyond in the renovated Kilburn Theatre. Up to 20% of the use of the facility will be dedicated to this partnership with the goal of establishing the Rarig Center as a key gathering place for cross disciplinary and collaborative dialogue, creation and sharing of some of the University’s most daring and experimental research in a state of the art venue.” In short, we think it will become the space of choice for a great deal of the creative research done at the University of Minnesota.

One of our major goals as a department has been to ask, in theory and in practice, how the nature of dance and theater performance is changing in an increasingly media-savvy world. The renovated Kilburn Theatre will allow us to examine this question in depth, and show the results to the world at large. That is one of the many reasons we are really excited about the project.

Please “Take A Seat” at the Kilburn Theatre

by Joe Sullivan, CLA Development Officer for the Arts

Many of us yearn to make a positive difference – here is a terrific opportunity.

The Department of Theatre Arts and Dance wishes to renovate the Kilburn Arena Theatre on the second floor of the Rarig Center in Minneapolis. This is the first substantial upgrade of any of the four stages in the theatre building since the Rarig Center opened in 1973.

Our goal with the Kilburn renovation is to create a 21st Century, flexible, multi-purpose space for research, theatre arts and dance education, and the engagement of new audiences. The improvements we plan are described in the accompanying article.

Keeping our teaching and performance spaces state-of-the-art is an important part of how the U of M sustains its leadership role in the research and practice of theatre arts and dance. A renovated Kilburn Theatre helps us retain our excellent faculty members and recruit the most talented theatre and dance students from across the nation and world.

The vision for the Kilburn Theatre renovation is truly extraordinary. Total renovation cost is $2,000,000 and we’ve already raised $1,500,000. We’re 75% of the way there! Our goal is to raise the remaining $500,000 by the end of the year so that renovation can begin in March 2013, with a grand re-opening of the Kilburn scheduled for September 2013.

You can make the difference. We invite you today to “Take A Seat” at the Kilburn Theatre by putting your name, your family name, or the name of a colleague or beloved teacher on one of the seats in the renovated Kilburn.

“Take A Seat” donors will see their name – or the name of someone they choose to honor – engraved on a brass plaque on one of our new seats.

Sponsorship Levels include:

$5,000 – Your name on four seats, plus donor wall recognition.

$2,500 – Your name on two seats, plus donor wall recognition.

$1,000 – Your name on one seat in the Kilburn Theatre.

$500 – Young Alumni (individuals who have graduated within the last ten years from the U of M) will see their name on a seat in a designated section of the Kilburn.

We need you! Come “Take A Seat” with us in the renovation of the Kilburn Theatre. Seat sponsors must still purchase tickets to performances at the Kilburn Theatre and are not guaranteed seating in the chairs they have named.

Your gift, combined with others, can help us move significantly closer to our goal. Can we count on your support? All gifts are payable over a 12-month period and are fully tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information, contact Joe Sullivan at 612-624-8573 or jmsulliv@umn.edu, or donate online at www.theatre.umn.edu/give. Please be sure to designate your gift to the “Kilburn Renovation Fund.”

On behalf of the generations of students, faculty and audience members who will enjoy this space and all it has to offer, we thank you for your support of the Kilburn Theatre renovation.
Applause 2012

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Spring Awakening
book and lyrics by STEVEN SATER music by DUNCAN SHEIK
based on the play by FRANK WEDEKIND
directed by PETER ROTHSTEIN
music direction by DENISE PROSEK
choreographed by CARL FLINK
APRIL 12 - MAY 6, 2012